Old Temple Heights And the 'Widow's Mite'

By John Clagett Proctor.

The recently announced sale of the Temple Heights property, located just to the northeast of the intersection of Connecticut and Florida avenues, to a New York syndicate, brings to mind the history of this tract and the picturesque fable attached to the magnificent great oak still growing on the grounds, near the old mansion.

Early known as a part of "Widow's Mite," the first trace of the grant to this property appears in the will of James Langworth of St. Johns, Charles County, Md., probated on August 18, 1660, mention here being made of his wife Agatha, to whom he left one-third of his estate during her life, and all lands should she survive the testator's children, given as William, John, Mary and Eliza.

To his son, John, he willed 300 acres on St. Clements Bay and his rights to 670 acres "yet to be taken up." Though not yet given the name Widow's Mite, there is no doubt that this grant, later patented by John, the son, in 1664, as the record shows, soon afterward was transferred to his brother William, who in his will, drawn February 7, 1693, and probated May 1, 1694, disposed by name of this identical piece of property.

Residence at 1869 Columbia road, no longer standing. The estate on which this home stood was bought in 1836 from Christian and Matthew Hines, by John Little. It was earlier owned by Dr. William Thornton, original architect of the U. S. Capitol.

Historic Residence

At the time the District of Columbia was ceded to the Federal Government by the State of Maryland, the Temple Heights section belonged to Anthony Holmead, and in 1809, this particular tract, then containing 16 acres, was sold to Col. Michael Nourse, and it was evidently Col. Nourse who erected the original part of the residence, and here he resided until he sold the estate in 1835 and moved to the city, as he found it took him too long to get to the Treasury Department, where he was chief clerk to his brother. His children were also responsible for his giving up the estate, because they claimed it was too far out in the country. Indeed, it was many years later before Connecticut avenue was even run through.

Quite likely the next owner and occupant of the place was Paul Kinchy, who resided there with his wife, Magdelene Kinchy, and his children from the time of his marriage until 1859. Paul Kinchy was a confectioner with his place of business on the south side of Pennsylvania avenue between Tenth and Eleventh streets, where now stands the Bureau of Internal Revenue Building. Mrs. Kinchy was, before her marriage, Magdelene Hitz, and upon her death the estate was sold for $10,000 by the appointed executor, John Hitz, then the Swiss consul general, who resided on A street south of the Capitol, now a part of the Capitol Grounds. He was the father of the late William Hitz, associate justice of the District Court of Appeals.

In a letter addressed to the writer some years ago by Miss Margaret B. Gillespie, granddaughter of Louisa Hitz, Miss Gillespie has this to say: "I have a most amusing little account book which was kept by my great-aunt when she was a schoolgirl as a business record of income and expenditure for the Kinchys. It is an entertaining bit of literature when one compares the infinitesimal cost of commodities with today's doings.

An Hour's Journey

"My grandmother used to refer to the property as 'the Widow's Mite.' The property at that time extended much farther north and east than at present, but it was bounded on the south by a road called 'The Boundary,' now Florida avenue, then the connecting link between the canal in Georgetown and the shipping port in the present wharf district. The wagons used to creak past the house carrying produce one way and the other, and this probably accounts for Florida avenue's devious trail through the city. It has been told that Aunt Kinchy used to come out on her highest porch with a powerful spyglass and observe her husband when the time came for him to leave his place of business on Pennsylvania avenue. When he departed preparations for dinner were started, and there was plenty of time, as it must have taken that gentleman upward of an hour to make the journey by horse-drawn vehicle.

"We had never heard of the legend of the Treaty Oak until it was proclaimed by the appearance of a bronze tablet on the tree. We have since learned that the stories about it were invented by my great uncle, John Hitz, who had told tales during knee-sitting episodes to several children who were frequent visitors at the house.

Corner of 15th and G

"The Kinchys owned quite a bit of property, according to the account book which I have mentioned. Among the items on the list was the lot on the corner of Fifteenth and G streets, where Keith's Theater now stands. This, it is stated, brought an annual income of $1,200 a year, and, it is naively added to the record, 'the whole is subject, however, to annual taxes, insurance, repairs and improvements.' Also a lot on the corner of Tenth street and Pennsylvania avenue yielded an annual income of $1,000 a year. These appear to have been considered unworthwhile investments, as they were all sold off and the money absorbed without apparent benefit to the heirs."

Boschke, in his map of the District of Columbia completed between 1856 and 1859, gives H. Willard as owner or occupant of Temple Heights, and maybe both the southern part of the grounds was then heavily wooded, and Mr. Willard's name is still shown on maps as late as 1865. In 1866, Thomas P. Morgan, at one time major and superintendent of police and later Commissioner of the District of Columbia from 1879 to 1883, acquired this property and improved the present building then standing, and gave the estate the name of Oak Lawn.

From 1878 to at least 1899, the property was occupied by the Dean family, of which Edward C. Dean seems to have been the head of the house.

By 1899 Mr. Dean had died, and his widow, Amanda M. Dean, was living on the property. Mr. Dean's occupations at various times, as given by the city directory, were president of the Potomac Terra Cotta Co., manufacturer and car builder.

Bought by Masonic Lodge

In 1921, an organization, then known as the Woman's National Foundation, made an effort to buy the property, with the idea of erecting there a big clubhouse, but the project never materialized, and the following year the estate was bought by the Grand Lodge of Masons from the Dean estate for $900,000.

However, Oak Lawn, or Temple Heights its more recent name, is certainly a beautiful tract of land, and the old homestead being surrounded by many beautiful trees, among which, is the "Treaty Oak," so-called because of a fable that a treaty was once signed beneath its enormous limbs by the white men and the Indians, lends to it a charm hard to match anywhere.

Dr. Anita Newcomb McGee, one of Washington's best-known scientific women, daughter of a scientist, wife of a noted ethnologist and a descendant of Col. Nourse, before mentioned, tried more than a decade ago to nail the story about this tree, but apparently did not succeed, for, after all, people believe what pleases them most, and the story of the white woman who refused to become the chief's squaw, and subsequently was restricted to the shade of this tree, is no doubt still believed by many who disregard the impossibilities surrounding the case.

Three Hundred Years Ago

Instead of saying, "more than a hundred years ago," according to the story, it would be more accurate to say "more than 300 years ago" the District was inhabited by the Indians. True, they were the Anacostia Indians, or, more properly, the Necotchtank, who are said to

Temple Heights, also known as Oak Lawn, early home of Michael Nourse.

have been a tribe or band probably of the Conoy, and who formerly lived on the Anacostia branch of the Potomac River in the District.

Their principal village was near our present Anacostia, the name being a corruption of the name of the tribe from which also is taken the word "Analostan," the name of the island near the Virginia side of the Potomac and east of the Francis Scott Key Bridge, also known as Mason's Island, and more recently as Theodore Roosevelt Island.

The late James Mooney, who probably knew the history of the Indians of this locality at least as well as any other man, tells us that the Nacotchtank Indians were of the great Algonquin stock. They spoke the language of the Powhatan confederacy, of which Pocahontas was a celebrated daughter, and which occupied Tidewater, Va., from the waters of Albermarle Sound to the Potomac, and probably also the basin of the Patuxent. However, the Maryland branch, at least after the death of Powhatan, appears to have had but slight connection with the main body.

East of the Capitol

Their principal location, according to S. V. Proudfit, an authority on the aborigines of the lower Potomac "seems to have been about due east of the Capitol, for the fields at this point give greater evidence of occupation than most others, though indications of Indian occupation have been found at nearly all points of the valley.

"It should be noted that the dwellings were in most cases close to the bank of the stream. A line drawn parallel with the shore and 300 feet distant would include the greaterr part of the houses.

"Within the area thus indicated may be found every variety of stone implement common to the North American Indian—arrowheads, spearheads, knives, drills, perforators, scrapers, sinkers, polished axes, sharpening stones, pipes, slate tablets, pestles, mortars, cupstones, hammer stones, as well as that rude ax-shaped implement of chipped quartzite which has yet to receive a name. Associated with these, and forming no inconsiderable part of the remains, are found partly worked implements—some broken, others worked into the first rude forms of the arrowhead or knife and then abandoned, and, abounding everywhere, are clips and pebbles of quartz and quartzite having but a chip or two struck from the original surface.

"The fields have been under cultivation for many years and are regularly visited by local collectors, yet there are today places fairly strewn with wreckage of the old village life."

The 'Widow's Mite' Legend

But as to the Widow's Mite myth, the writer does not mean to say that there is nothing to suggest this legend. Indeed, many whites were captured by the Indians in early Colonial days and it would be very easy to piece together a story identical with the "Treaty Oak" story, if one's mind ran in that direction. A story of interest along this line is reported in the Maryland Assembly proceedings, April to May, 1666, when the killing of Mrs. Langworth's children by the Indians was discussed at a session of the General Assembly held at St. Marys, and since the title to the Widow's Mite was in the Langworth family during this period, the murder might have occurred within the boundaries of the District of Columbia, though this is not likely.

But of interest also is the historic neighborhood of Temple Heights, for just to the west once stood Kalorama mansion, reminiscent of Jefferson, Barlow, Fulton and others, and to the north of Oak Lawn, a tract of land once owned by Dr. William Thornton, early architect of the Capitol. In Mrs. Thornton's diary, which she kept during the first years of the Capital, she frequently refers to this farm, where her husband sent his horses to graze and where general farming was done.

About 1828, this farm, containing about 56 acres, was sold by Anna Maria Thornton to Christian and Matthew Hines for $5,650, a down payment of $1,500 being made. Upon this land they erected a modest frame dwelling, about 25 feet square and a story and a half high. As the writer knew it in his youthful days, it was whitewashed, a practice at that time quite general.

Subsequent to 1836 this property was sold to John Little, a butcher with a stand in the Center Market, who about 1860 gave up the old home on the east side of Columbia road and built a large three-story dwelling on the west side of this thoroughfare, which at the time of its removal a few years ago was numbered 1869. The site is now a public reservation.

One of Oldest Roads

Dr. Thornton also had a farm on the Frederick road, about 5 miles from Georgetown, where he grazed 23 horses, this road extended from Georgetown to Frederick city, where it tapped the road which ran from Chester, Pa., to Fort Cumberland, now Cumberland, Md., reminiscent of Gen. Braddock's fatal expedition. The Washington end of the Frederick road is now Wisconsin avenue.

Prior to the extension of Connecticut avenue, Columbia road also bounded Temple Heights on the west, and this thoroughfare, incidentally, is one of the oldest roads in Washington and actually antedates the founding of the city. It was a branch of the old Georgetown or Bladensburg road and was being traveled when Washington was in fact a city of magnificent distances. At an early date it became known as Taylors Lane road. In 1862 it was called Rock Creek road, while the 1878 plat book gives it as Georgetown road.

Boschke's map shows this road as starting from the east bank of Rock Creek at P street, continuing around Boundary street (now Florida avenue) until it intersected with Connecticut avenue, from which point it continues over nearly the entire course of Columbia road until it reached a point in Columbia Heights about due north of Twelfth street. From here it took a northeasterly direction, joining Rock Creek Church road at about Park road, and continuing along the same road, past the Soldiers' Home, Rock Creek Cemetery and on to Bladensburg, Baltimore and points north.

Woman Teacher Brings New Speech To Paralyzed Children in Clinics Here

By Harriet Griffiths

Teaching cerebral palsied children to speak calls for a combination of patience, applied psychology and "trying to make it fun," according to Mildred Sears, whose daily work it is.

Cerebral palsy is a condition where muscular control is lost or impaired by maldevelopment, birth injury or such diseases as meningitis. This lack of control may be in the arms, legs, eyes, hearing facilities, tongue or the speech mechanism, or it may be a combination of handicaps.

Employed by the District Society for Crippled Children in the occupational therapy departments of several clinics here, Miss Sears, who graduated last June from Maryland University, works with individual children at Gallinger and Children's Hospitals and the Health School.

Her first job with the speechless child is to strengthen the muscles of his tongue, which usually is bulbous or enlarged, and to build up co-ordination and response in those muscles.

Miss Mildred Sears giving speech exercises to two of her patients. —Harris & Ewing Photo.

In most cases, the beginner cannot put his tongue out and up, so Miss Sears takes it in her fingers with a piece of gauze and moves it up, down, right and left in a rythmic movement.

"We make a little game of it," she explains. "I chant a rhyme—'Tick tock, just like a clock.' The children like it better than anything else we do. Of course I find myself saying it in my sleep!"

Gradually, very gradually, for it is painstaking work, she brings the child to the place where he can do the tongue exercise without her assistance. This is the first major hurdle. When he has learned the sensation, Miss Sears employs a little psychology.

"After awhile, the children learn that if they help me, I won't hold on to their tongues so hard," she points out.

One of her indispensable aids is a lollipop. Little tongues will reach well for a lick of the sucker.

"You spend most of your energy trying to make it fun," Miss Sears says, and watching her work with a little boy at Children's Hospital the other day was assurance that she makes it fun.

What Next?

Five-year-old "Butch" was learning his vowels. His blue eyes wore a "what next" expression as he sat in a little chair at his teacher's knee. His chubby fingers played with the hem of her dress.

"Ah—aa—ee—ah—o," he repeated after her, and laughed gleefully at her "Fine!"

From vowels, the work goes to consonants in speech therapy. A big factor in teaching the cerebral palsied child to talk is getting him to relax. And much depends upon the child's mental attitude.

Sometimes, Miss Sears finds, a child will refuse to try to talk. Then only luck will do the trick.

One shy little boy would not utter a sound except to his mother. Not only that, he stolidly maintained an absolute "deadpan." Miss Sears worked with him for two hours one day, keeping up a lively monologue with a scrapbook. Her efforts to make him smile, however, were futile.

Finally a fly lit on his nose. This was too much to resist. The little boy laughed and the no-smile spell was broken for good.

Getting him to talk, however, yet was to be accomplished. Miss Sears managed that by making him angry. He liked bright-colored scrapbooks, so she took all the colorful ones from him and insisted that he look at a plain dark blue book. His first conversation with her ensued:

"No!"

There is a tremendous satisfaction, Miss Sears says, in watching a child progress from the point of inability to talk at all to one of understandable vocal communication to strangers.

Care of Crippled Children

The Crippled Children's Society clinic is under the direction of Dr. Winthrop M. Phelps, medical director of the Children's Rehabilitation Institute in Baltimore and former orthopedic surgery professor at Yale University.

Cerebral palsied children are referred to the clinic for consultation by private and public clinic physicians. Their treatment includes physiotherapy, occupational therapy, braces and other special appliances by personnel in the treatment centers at Children's and Freedman's Hospitals and the Crippled Children's unit at Gallinger Hospital.

According to Dr. Phelps, relatively little was known about the diagnosis and treatment of the cerebral palsied until 10 years ago and although progress has been made in the field, there now exist very limited facilities in the country for treatment and education.

Prevalence of the condition has been estimated as 50 cases out of every 100,000 population. On that basis, the society sets the District's case quota at 750.

The life of the cerebral palsied child is affected in ways outside the realm of the resultant handicap itself. There is the problem of his adjustment to his family and the community, with his severe speech defects, his facial grimaces or his stumbling gait, to be overcome among other things. His need for confidence is mountainous.

Special Classes

The need for co-ordination between physical care and education for such children is recognized in the Board of Education's classes for crippled children, which have been in operation 15 years. Two-thirds of the enrollment at the Health School for Crippled Children have a cerebral palsy condition.

The Crippled Children's Society, recognizing a need for more extensive work with cerebral palsied children, is planning more facilities in that line. Psychological diagnoses, education of families to the child's problems and the providing of outside-the-home care for those who need it make up the goal toward which the society is working.

War Hasn't Changed Famous Old Clubs

By Jean Meegan,
Associated Press Staff Writer.

NEW YORK.—Whatever else may be changed by the war, Manhattan's dozen aristocratic men's clubs, with their sedate members dozing beside the front windows, go on in the pattern of tradition.

The priceless stateliness of the Union Club, the straight backs of the Knickerbocker, the stiff faces at the Metropolitan, the hard hierarchy of blood and money upon which they were founded—all have withstood the Second World War.

The Union, the oldest of them, has been withstanding wars since 1836. The only time the original Colonial corpuscles of the Rhinelanders, Van Rensselaers, Pierreponts, Morrises, etc., were diluted at all was in 1929 when they took in people who had merely money.

The Knickerbocker was founded in 1871 by sons of Union members who got tired of being on the waiting list. Then 20 years later the Union also was responsible for the founding of the Metropolitan Club.

One Big Family

In the case of the Knickerbocker, the young bloods simply set themselves up in a club of their own. In the years since then, they have so inter-married that the membership is almost one big family: Three Astors, a Roosevelt, two Vanderbilts, two Dukes, a Drexel, Goelets and Rockefellers.

Ladies may lunch in the club, there is room for 14 members to live there, 112 of them are in the service and no longer required to fork over the $200 annual dues. Seclusion means so much to these patricians that the steward is not allowed to put the street number on the blue canopy of the red brick clubhouse.

Invention of the Metropolitan Club was a much juicier incident. J. P. Morgan, a member in good standing at the Union, found himself (for business reasons) in the company of several Western railroad presidents.

Confidently the banker put up the names of his new associates for his club but the board of directors, who may not have been aware of life west of the Hudson, turned down the transportation pioneers and Morgan, reinforced by Whitneys, Vanderbilts, Lorillards, Iselings and other powerful figures, establsihed the Metropolitan.

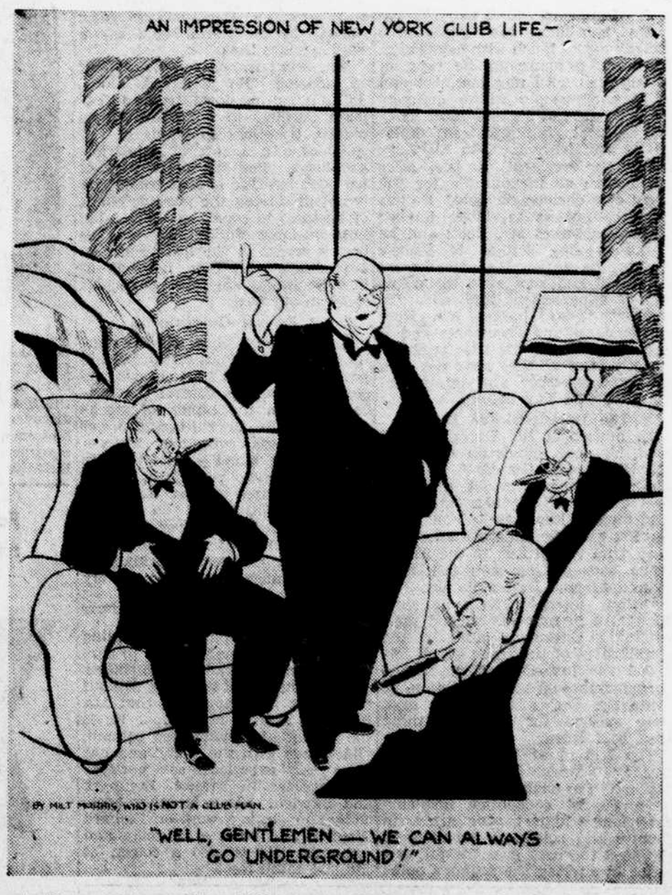
Means Moving Very Little

Another club started by members of the Union is the Brook. A combination of Biddles, Wanamakers, Vanderbilts (you can see that moving in this society means moving very little indeed) hit on the idea of a club where meals—superlatively good ones—would be served 24 hours a day. This retreat sounds like fun. All the bon vivants sit at one large table before a great fireplace.

Even the clubs started for social rather than sociable reasons are doing a huge dining business because of the war. Rationing being what it is, socialite housekeepers come to the clubs in droves for two reasons:

1. The fare is good and all club food is cheap because there can be no more than a 25 per cent profit. 2. In wartime, the members can't motor around the country, go fishing or trail around to the various smart spots on the Eastern seaboard—so they stop in at the club.

One lofty haven that doesn't seem as much of an accumulation of things past is the Racquet and Tennis on Park avenue, which is the kind of a place where you can buy theater tickets and a haircut—if you are one of the 2,000 members. It's even possible to run into a fellow member in as public a place, as say, the Stork Club.



The Newest of Them

The newest of the blue blooded combines is the River Club, organized in 1930 by Kermit Roosevelt for sociable tennis and meals. Probably the forebears of some of the organizers (many of whom are now city statues) would tumble from their bronze pedestals if they knew that women can be full fledged members.

Standards changed and money changed hands in the last years of the boom and the early days of the depression. Bank balances began nudging blue blood as an entrance requirement into these venerable institutions. The pretenders became the pillars in no time at all.

Certain clubs, of course, have special reasons for existence other than social registration, even though the members happen to be the same stripe of gentry. Practically everybody on the books at the Union and Knickerbocker also is in good standing at the St. Nicholas Club, where the sole qualification is that you be a descendant of a family who lived in New York before 1875.

The Players Club is for patrons of the arts and has a membership which includes Ogden Reid, Maxwell Anderson, Lionel Barrymore, George Arliss and Franklin P. Adams. The Lotos Club is supposed to promote fellowship among journalists, artists and members of the musical and dramatic professions.

Some of the universities have their own clubhouses in midtown: Harvard Yale, Cornell, Princeton. And then there is the University Club, where the tenants slump in the windows exactly like the tycoons up the street, but they need only a diploma to be an inmate.

Those Were the Happy Days —By Dick Mansfield